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July 1, 1958

Professor J. Dufay  
Director, Astronomical Observatory  
Lyons, France

Dear Professor Dufay:

I just wanted to express my debt of appreciation and gratitude for your excellent monograph on interstellar matter, which I recently read in English translation. It was one of the most provocative books I have ever read, and it struck my colleague Dr. Cowie in exactly the same way.

I am taking the liberty of enclosing a semi popular article which was to a large extent based on your monograph. I hope none of the arguments are distorted; they will all be familiar to you. However, I do not believe that many biochemists have yet appreciated the significance of recent astrophysical findings for that most important problem, the origin of life.

May I call your attention to just one point which is marked off on p. 1474 on the enclosure. You have stressed the difficulty of accounting for the evolution of enough centers of condensation. To a biologist, an obvious answer comes from the possibility of splitting (proliferation) of the few grains that have spontaneously formed. But I would not be competent to evaluate this hypothesis in quantitative terms.

While my interest in this subject is beyond the sphere of professional competence, I would appreciate the favor of receiving from you notices or reprints of your future publications on the subject, and I look forward to meeting you on some occasion.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Medical Genetics

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